

LinkNYC

Local Event

National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge 2024  
Launching a new generation of entrepreneurs  
#NFTEChallenge

242 W 41st Street  
October 10, 2024  
<https://nfte.com/evnt/10112024>



**nfte!**  
Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship

FUEL a FUTURE

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2025  
Annual Report  
Annual Report  
Annual Report

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025  
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# POWERING DREAMS

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025



## 3 MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

2024-25 was a year of progress. NFTE strengthened systems, expanded access, and elevated youth entrepreneurship on influential global stages. Alumni helped shape the national conversation on the American Dream. Students showed what's possible with an entrepreneurial mindset.

## 4 NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS & REGIONAL ADVISORY BOARDS

## 5-9 THE NFTE EXPERIENCE

Founded in 1987 by the late Steve Mariotti, NFTE advanced his vision of global access to youth entrepreneurship under the leadership of CEO Dr. J.D. LaRock by strengthening the global nonprofit's mission, vision, purpose, and values. Today, NFTE delivers an entrepreneurial mindset through trained educators, experiential learning, skills-based volunteerism, lean startup tools, and inspiring competitions.

## 10-15 CELEBRATING STUDENTS & ALUMNI

- Oct. 10, 2024 - National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge
- Nov. 21, 2024 - World Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge
- Feb. 26, 2025 - Founders Forum Pitch Competition
- May 1, 2025 - NFTE Entrepreneurial Spirit Awards Gala
- May 13-June 6, 2025 - Youth Entrepreneurship Challenges in NFTE's Capital, Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, New England, South, Southeast and West regions.

## 16-17 GLOBAL & DOMESTIC IMPACT

## 18 NFTE NEXUS POLICY BRIEFS

## 19 FINANCIALS

## 20-23 THANK YOU SUPPORTERS!

# Mission

NFTE brings the power of **entrepreneurship education** to learners, educators, and decision-makers so all young people can own their futures.

# Vision

Every young person in the world will learn how to start a business.

MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP  
NFTE CEO DR. J.D. LAROCK

# REIMAGINING THE POSSIBILITIES



WATCH THE  
WEF OPEN  
FORUM

As we reflect on the July 2024-June 2025 program year, I am deeply proud of the role the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) continues to play in shaping systems, elevating youth voices, and expanding access to opportunity. This year, NFTE's impact was visible on some of the world's most influential stages—signaling a growing recognition that entrepreneurship education is essential to economic mobility and long-term prosperity.

A defining moment was the opening of NFTE's exhibit, Powering Dreams: The Entrepreneur's Journey, at the Milken Center for Advancing the American Dream in Washington, D.C., located just steps from the White House. The exhibit brings NFTE students' stories and aspirations to the national spotlight, reinforcing the power of entrepreneurship education to transform lives and communities.

Advancing systems change remained a central focus. Alongside a coalition of entrepreneurship education organizations, NFTE engaged leaders on Capitol Hill to advocate for equitable access to entrepreneurship education—furthering our founder Steve Mariotti's vision that every young person should learn how to start a business.

NFTE's influence also reached the global stage. At the World Economic Forum, we elevated youth entrepreneurship through panels on financial literacy and LGBTQ+ visibility, reinforcing the importance of inclusive, future-ready education in today's economy.

This year marked the second annual celebration of NFTE Youth Entrepreneurship Day, which received extraordinary recognition, including a Presidential letter from the Biden Administration and official proclamations from Dallas; Miami-Dade County, Florida; Massachusetts; Texas; and Washington, D.C. What began as a call to action has quickly become a movement, uniting communities around the importance of nurturing young innovators.

Our students' creativity and ambition were showcased through the National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge and the World Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge, with the latter hosted at the prestigious New York Stock Exchange (NYSE). In April, NFTE was honored to ring the NYSE closing bell, a milestone moment for our organization and the young entrepreneurs we serve.

I also extend my sincere thanks to Michael J. Kacsmar, who concluded his service as NFTE Board Chair at the end of FY25. A board member since 2016 and Chair since 2019, Michael's leadership has been instrumental in advancing NFTE's mission. Thank you for your continued partnership and belief in the power of young people to shape their futures through entrepreneurship.

Sincerely,

Dr. J.D. LaRock  
President & Chief Executive Officer  
Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE)



OUR LEADERSHIP

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Enterprise  
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**Carla Thompson Payton**  
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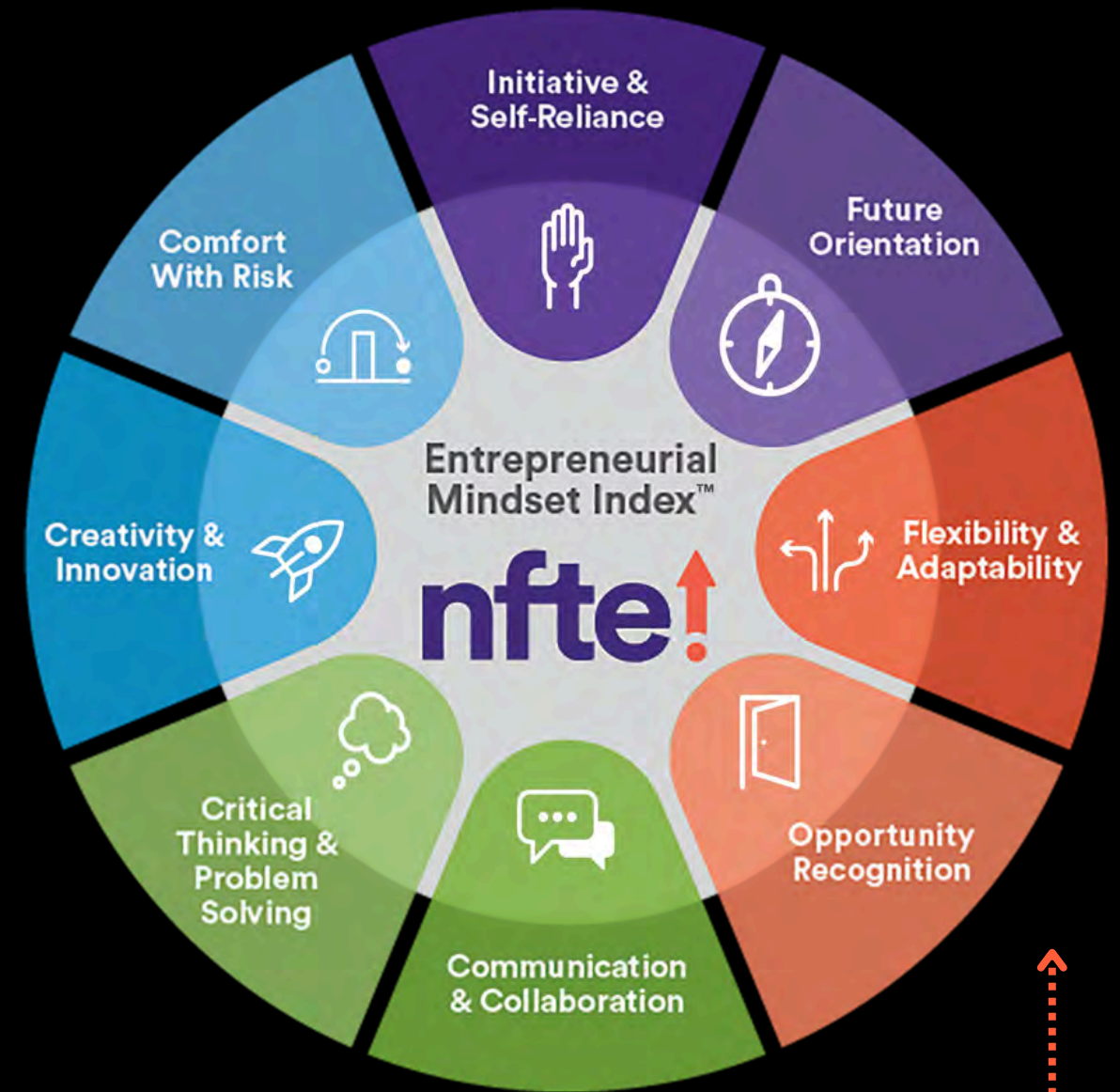
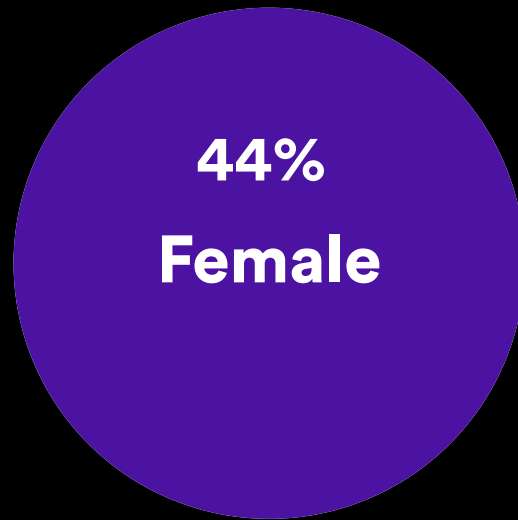
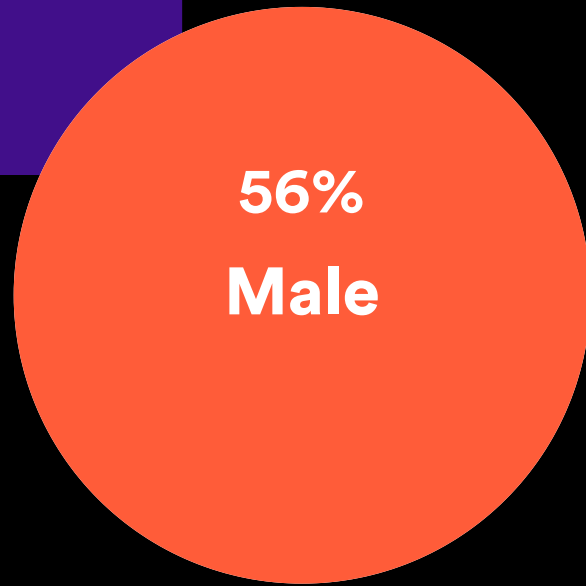
**David Wellisch**  
CEO & Co-Founder  
Collage Group

**Tucker York**  
Global Head of Goldman  
Sachs Wealth Management  
Goldman Sachs & Co. LLC

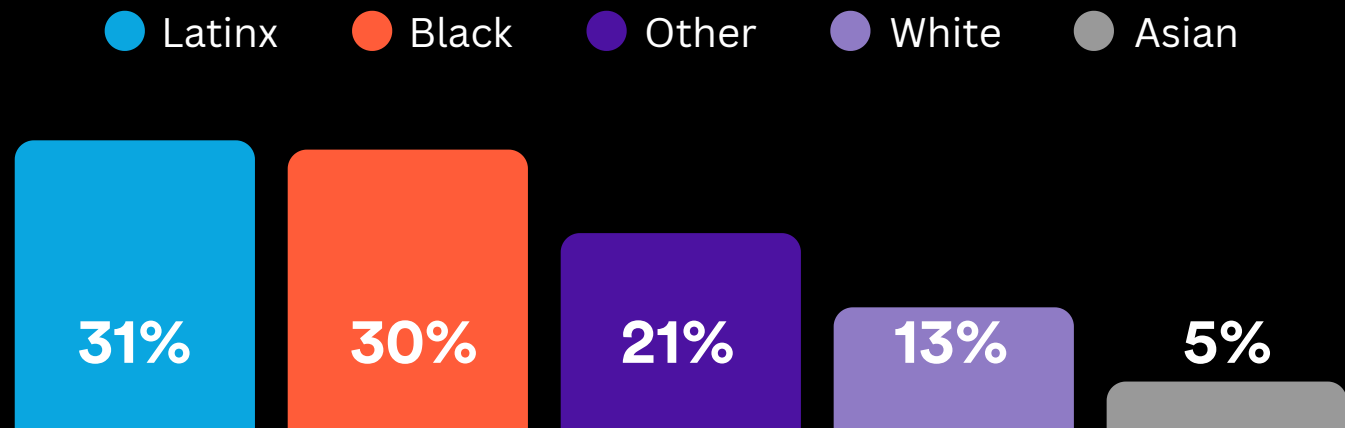




**1.4+ MILLION**  
students served  
since 1987



**READ MY STORY**



**8 EMI DOMAINS**

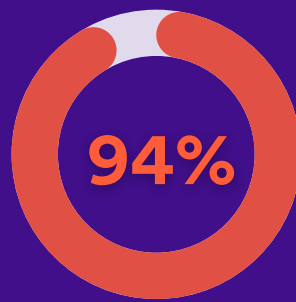
**NFTE TEACHER**  
**Imani Butler**  
Silver Creek High School, San Jose, CA



**687**  
educators taught 1,155 NFTE  
courses in FY2025

**74,532**

students worldwide completed NFTE programs in FY2025.



of surveyed alumni said NFTE helped them with their businesses\*

\* NFTE Alumni Report (2021)



THE NFTE EXPERIENCE



READ MY STORY

**10**

A cohort of 10 alumni participated in the 4th Annual NFTE Founders Forum

NFTE ALUMNA, Class of 2009  
**Jasstina Featherstone**  
Founder of Jazz Esscents Candle Co.



**2,809**

joined the NFTE Alumni Corps

JOIN THE CORPS

**14,913**

hours of coaching, judging, and other volunteer services were given to NFTE



**6,259**

volunteers contributed 488 volunteer experiences, making an impact on 17,000+ NFTE students worldwide



NFTE's volunteers have served as virtual or in-person coaches, judges, advisors, guests for networking sessions, guest speakers, field trip hosts and participants, and Innovation Day volunteers

**BECOME A VOLUNTEER**



Implement Relevant, Real-World Learning



Support Teacher Growth & Satisfaction



Build Future-Ready Skills



**nfte!**

Boost Student Engagement & Attainment



Connect School, Community & Industry

**WHY YOU SHOULD CHOOSE NFTE**



BMO  BrooklineBank

 ShipBob  **Fidelity**  
INVESTMENTS

**E→TRADE**<sup>®</sup>  
from Morgan Stanley

 Valley

 **DADE COUNTY FEDERAL**  
C R E D I T U N I O N

**nfte!**

**CORPORATE VOLUNTEERS**  
**OF THE YEAR**



In the spring of 2025, each of the seven NFTE Regions selected an individual and corporate partner/volunteer of the year to honor during the Regional Youth Entrepreneurship Challenges.



# INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR



Meshell R Baker



Alan Alvarez



Chris Boyd



Kristoffer Kizer



Blake Underhill



Marsha Corelien



Matt Aaron



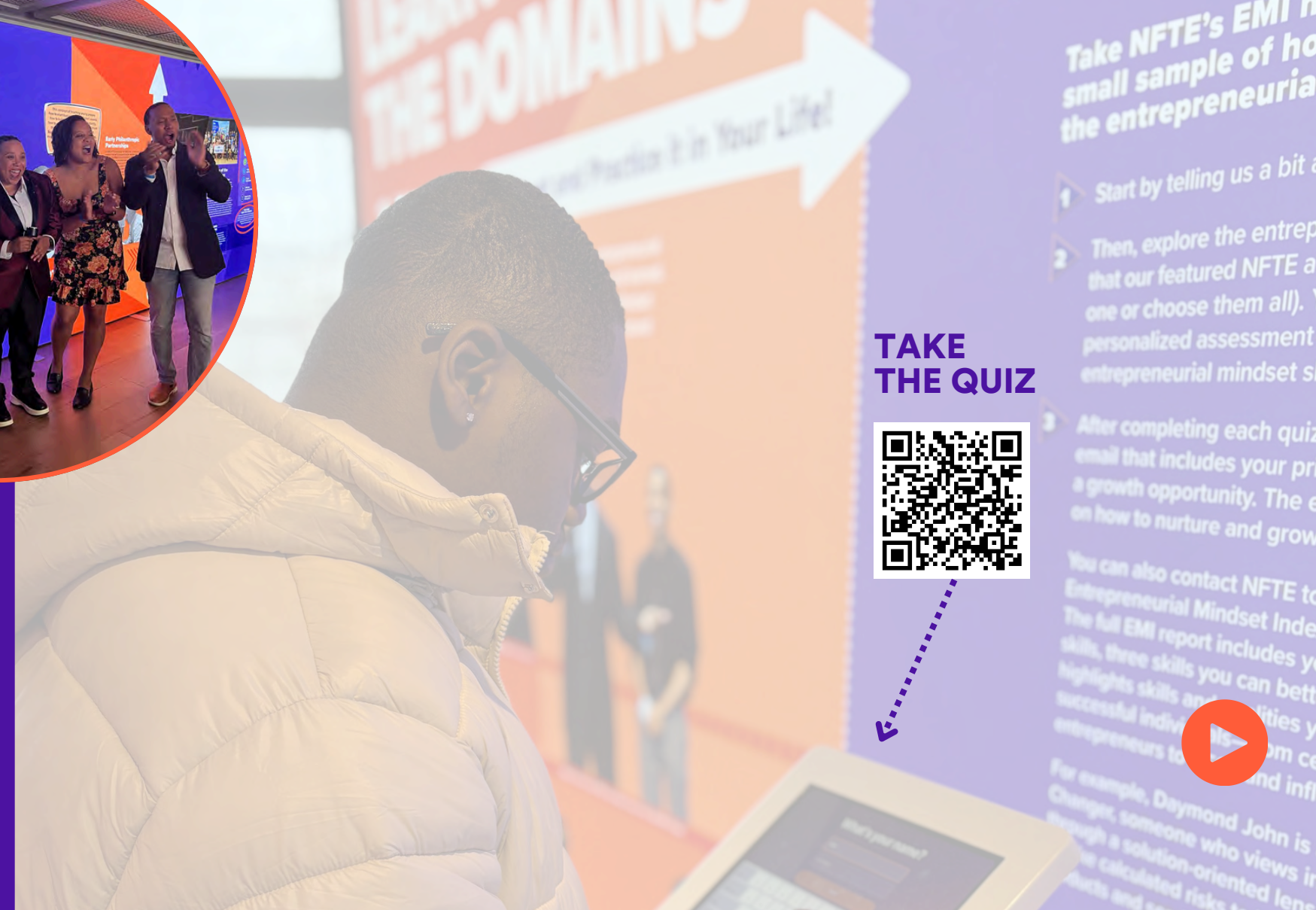
DRIVING THE DIALOGUE

# ADVANCING THE AMERICAN DREAM

Our thought-provoking exhibit, Powering Dreams: The Entrepreneur's Journey, marks a defining milestone for NFTE. Located at the Milken Center for Advancing the American Dream in Washington, D.C., just steps from the White House, the NFTE Gallery was a highlight of the center's grand opening in September 2025. By placing our alumni's stories and aspirations on a national stage, the exhibit underscores the life-changing impact of entrepreneurship education on youth, families, and communities.

Powering Dreams spotlights 14 NFTE alumni whose real-life journeys ignite boldness, curiosity, optimism, and self-awareness—fueling the drive to turn ambition into achievement. The featured alumni are Darius Davie, Chanté Goodwin, Jasmine Lawrence Campbell, Raneem Alsuwaidani, Zainabou Thiam, Cody Chang, Chris Argote, Andre McCain, Jonathan Ovadia, Sarah Farzam, Jennifer Lee Sowden, Preet Sabharwal, Luke Cooper, and Ryan Williams.

Tickets: [nfte.com/events](https://nfte.com/events)



LAUNCHING THE NEXT GENERATION

# FUEL A FUTURE IN ACTION



Through the Fuel a Future Campaign, NFTE elevated a call to invest in the next generation of innovators, anchoring this effort in the second annual Youth Entrepreneurship Day, celebrated globally during National Entrepreneurship Month in November.

Led by NFTE each year, Youth Entrepreneurship Day highlights the importance of fostering an entrepreneurial mindset in young people. Building on a successful inaugural year that included a Presidential letter from the Biden administration and multiple state and local proclamations, the 2024 celebration on Nov. 17 marked a significant expansion in national recognition.

In 2024, the day was formally recognized by the White House, governors in Georgia, Illinois, Texas, and Massachusetts, mayors across major U.S. cities including New York, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Dallas, Baltimore, and St. Louis, and education leaders in California—underscoring broad, growing support for youth entrepreneurship and NFTE’s leadership in advancing it nationwide.

In St. Louis, Kenny Murdock, the Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the St. Louis Mayor’s office, presented a proclamation recognizing Youth Entrepreneurship Day at an EY Connect Day volunteer event.



In April 2025, NFTE reached a powerful milestone when we rang the Closing Bell at the New York Stock Exchange in honor of Financial Literacy Month. The moment marked a public recognition of NFTE’s growing leadership and visibility in entrepreneurship education and our commitment to preparing young people for success in business and in life.

NFTE President & CEO Dr. J.D. LaRock was joined on the podium by students, alumni, educators, board members, volunteers, and partners, united around our shared mission. NFTE student Jayden Freeman of Stamford High School served as the official bell ringer, representing the promise and potential of the next generation of entrepreneurs.

As the bell sounded, it amplified a clear message: the future of business belongs to bold, creative, and entrepreneurial young people. NFTE is proud to help lead the way.

NFTE CEO, students, alumni, board members, and volunteers ring the closing bell at the New York Stock Exchange.



## ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT AWARDS

Honoring Leaders Who Ignite Opportunity

# 2025 GALA



Emmy-winning NBC 4 consumer reporter Lynda Baquero hosted the star-studded event.

On May 1, NFTE's Entrepreneurial Spirit Awards Gala brought together leaders, alumni, and champions of youth entrepreneurship for an inspiring evening of recognition and connection. NFTE honored Damar Hamlin, Sarah Farzam, and Anthony Salcito for their extraordinary commitment to expanding opportunity and advancing our mission.

The program also included a heartfelt tribute to NFTE founder Steve Mariotti and a vibrant cocktail-hour expo featuring businesses led by six NFTE alumni entrepreneurs.

Anthony Salcito—NFTE Board member, longtime Microsoft leader, and Chief Institution Officer at Nerdy—was recognized for his decades of leadership in transforming education through innovation and personalized learning.

NFTE alumna Sarah Farzam (Class of 2006), founder of Bilingual Birdies, embodied the Entrepreneurial Spirit in action, showcasing how a bold idea can grow into a global enterprise spanning 21 cities across four countries.

The evening concluded with the presentation of the Entrepreneurial Leadership Award to NFL player, entrepreneur, and philanthropist Damar Hamlin, whose Chasing M's Foundation closely aligns with NFTE's mission to empower young people.

Hosted by Emmy-winning NBC 4 consumer reporter Lynda Baquero, the gala celebrated the power of entrepreneurship to change lives—past, present, and future—while spotlighting the lasting impact of the NFTE community.

## FOUNDERS FORUM

NFTE's Founders Forum Pitch Competition, presented by Ernst & Young LLP (EY US) and PayPal, took place on Feb. 26, 2025, as the culminating event of the Founders Forum Incubator Program.

**2025 WINNER**  
**JASSTINA**  
**FEATHERSTONE**

Three NFTE alumni founders competed for a \$10,000 capital investment pool. Jasstina Featherstone, founder of Jazz Esscents Candle Co., received the top prize of \$5,000, followed by Autumn Harmon of Express Yourself Studio (\$3,000) and Chardonnay Henry of Autism Axis Network (\$2,000).

**READ MORE**



## REGIONAL CHALLENGE RECAP

# REGIONAL CHAMPS



Each spring, NFTE students compete for seed capital in the Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge, the culminating event of NFTE's Entrepreneurship 1 and Entrepreneurship Essentials programs.

## Celebrating the FY2025 regional Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge winners:

- [NFTE CAPITAL](#) - [Arlo Pangilinan](#) from Oxon Hill High School in Prince George's County, Maryland, won with his business idea ScholarSync, which offers a mix of digital planners and online time management tools to help high school students. [Program](#) | [Video](#)
- [NFTE MID-ATLANTIC](#) - [Dorian Guzman-Lora](#), from Atmosphere Academy in the Bronx, New York, won with his business idea Energize, a gamified learning website with accessible video games that aims to fill the gap in STEM education. [Program](#) | [Video](#)
- [NFTE MIDWEST](#) - [Joshua Mallory](#) from Chicago Hope Academy won with his business idea Easy Fit, which provides accessible dress shirts with magnetic closures for people with upper body mobility challenges. [Program](#) | [Video](#)
- [NFTE NEW ENGLAND](#) - [Evan Perez](#) from The MET School in Providence, Rhode Island, won with his business idea Color Your Life, which produces hyper-personalized coloring books designed to get kids away from their digital devices. [Program](#) | [Video](#)
- [NFTE SOUTH](#) - [Kamsi Dukes](#) and [Aaira Masood](#) from Grand Prairie School for the Highly Gifted in Grand Prairie, Texas, won with their business idea Child Guardian, a watch that can ping a teacher's phone in situations where problems, including bullying, arise. [Program](#) | [Video](#)
- [NFTE SOUTHEAST](#) - [Briley Goble](#) from Lutz K-8 School in Lutz, Florida, won with her business idea PawAble, which provides adaptive pet products so those with disabilities can better enjoy the companionship of a pet. [Program](#) | [Video](#)
- [NFTE WEST](#) - [Andre Cheng](#) from Florence Nightingale Middle School in Los Angeles, won with his business idea Mindi, a mental health app that is low pressure, accessible, and anonymous. [Program](#) | [Video](#)



NATIONAL CHALLENGE RECAP

# THE 2024 NATIONAL CHAMPION



On Oct. 10, 2024, NFTE named Lucio Hightower-Rojas the winner of the 2024 National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge after a high-stakes competition among more than 40 regional finalists from across the country. The event was presented by the Citi Foundation and Ernst & Young LLP (EY US), with support from PayPal and Santander, and travel sponsorship from the Ralph Lauren Corporate Foundation.

Hightower-Rojas, a student from the Los Angeles Urban League, earned first place for his business idea Scholar Brilliance, an AI-driven, gamified platform designed to help students strengthen essays, manage tasks, and track progress throughout the scholarship application process. He received a \$10,000 prize and a 45-minute mentorship session with Daymond John, founder and CEO of FUBU.



WATCH US SHINE

Solonia Allen of the Los Angeles Urban League (Almndmlk) and Jessica Kahn of Cooper City High School in Florida (DocBox) were the national challenge runners-up. Each received \$2,500 to grow their businesses or further their educational goals.

The competition also honored NFTE alumna Naije'e Hanley (Class of 2019) with the Inclusive Innovator Award, supported by the MetLife Foundation. Hanley received a \$500 prize for Big Gurls Move, a business offering dance classes and apparel for plus-sized women, and shared her inspiring story of perseverance as an ovarian cancer survivor.

NFTE also recognized Citizens Bank and Andy Beepath, AVP and Business Banking Officer at Brookline Bank, with Volunteer of the Year awards for their outstanding commitment to supporting young entrepreneurs.



## WORLD CHALLENGE RECAP



# WORLD CHALLENGE



Two students from Palestine—Issa Odeh, 18, and Antony Saleh, 17—won NFTE’s 2024 World Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge at the New York Stock Exchange, earning a \$5,000 grand prize for Water World, an affordable device that monitors and purifies water in storage tanks and alerts users remotely.

The Nov. 21 competition brought together 11 student businesses from 10 countries for a high-stakes pitch event at the New York Stock Exchange. It was presented by the Citi Foundation, Ernst & Young LLP (EY US), and Zuora, with additional support from PayPal, the New York Stock Exchange, and UBS.

Two additional teams were recognized as finalists: Mediclic by Sami Jalloud, Noor Rashid, and Noor Shalabi of Palestine, and OUTEX by Yuliia Tkachenko, Kyrylo Martyniuk, Arina Khmeliuk, and Vadym Dobrovolskyi of Ukraine. Each finalist team received \$1,000 to advance their ventures, underscoring NFTE’s commitment to empowering young entrepreneurs to solve real-world challenges in their communities.



READ MORE

Winners were selected by a distinguished panel of industry leaders and NFTE champions, including Cody Chang of Tier One AI Labs and NFTE alumnus; Ingrid Giordano of Citi; Nicholas Haber of Certiport, a Pearson VUE business; Jon Herrick of the New York Stock Exchange; Ken Houseman of Zuora; and Sabina Zaman of EY US.

The event was emceed by Raneem Al Suwaidani, the 2023 NFTE National and World Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge winner, highlighting the power of alumni leadership within the NFTE community.



NFTE'S DOMESTIC REACH

# SEVEN U.S. REGIONS

FIND YOUR REGION

## Capital Region



## Midwest Region



## New England Region



## West Region



## South Region



## Southeast Region



## Mid-Atlantic Region



# IGNITING THE MINDSET IN 24 STATES





NFTE'S INTERNATIONAL REACH

# GLOBAL INNOVATION NETWORK

MEET OUR PARTNERS

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN 31 COUNTRIES



Argentina	Fundación Educación para el Futuro	Germany	NFTE Deutschland	Kenya	Rusinga Schools	Philippines	Far Eastern University	Tunisia	Youth Hub	United States of America <b>Also in 7 U.S. Regions &amp; 24 States</b>
Austria	IFTE	Greece	Pinewood American International School	Korea	KAIST IP CEO URROUND Inc	Qatar	ACS Schools International	Ukraine	Ukrainian Future Business Incubator	
Bermuda	Youth Entrepreneurship Initiative	Honduras	Western International School	Kuwait	Al Wazzan Education	Singapore	Halogen Foundation			
Canada	Challenger Consulting	India	ENpower TGELF	Mexico	Fundación E	Nigeria	ICLED International			
China	Green Light-Year Environmental Service Centre	Ireland	Foróige	Morocco	International Foundation for Training & Development	South Africa	Lentec			
Dominican Republic	Red Sox Player Academy	Israel	Unistream	Pakistan	Beaconhouse School System	Spain	Fundacio La Caixa			
Egypt	Jovesolides Egypt	Japan	Career Link	Palestinian Territory, Occupied	Creativity Lab	Switzerland	Swiss Centre of Entrepreneurial Thinking and Acting (sCETA)			



# TURNING INSIGHT INTO IMPACT

# NFTE NEXUS

## Policy Briefs

The second year of the NFTE Nexus Policy Brief series solidified its role as a trusted platform for timely, nonpartisan insights at the intersection of education, entrepreneurship, and workforce readiness. Its scope expanded to emphasize coalition-building, mentorship, equity, and systems-level change.

The following NFTE Nexus briefs deliver clear, nonpartisan insights that translate complex policy issues into actionable guidance for educators, policymakers, and partners:

- [Insights from the World Series of Innovation: Challenge-Based Learning in Action](#) (June 2025)
- [A Unified Voice for Youth Entrepreneurship: National Coalition Takes to Capitol Hill](#) (May 2025)
- [Unlocking Student Potential Through Volunteerism: The Role of Mentorship in Strengthening Outcomes in Entrepreneurship Education](#) (April 2025)
- [Uniting for Impact: The Role of Convening Organizations in Systemic Change](#) (April 2025)
- [From Alternative to Mainstream: How Florida is Redefining Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century](#) (February 2025)
- [Equity Through Entrepreneurship: NFTE's Approach to Education and Inclusion](#) (January 2025)
- [Balancing Profit & Purpose: Navigating Global Entrepreneurship Education](#) (November 2024)
- [Reimagining Workforce Readiness: A Coalition's Vision for Youth Entrepreneurship](#) (October 2024)
- [The Power of Partnership: GEAR UP Massachusetts and NFTE](#) (September 2024)
- [Revolutionizing Education: The Promise of Microschools and Youth Entrepreneurship](#) (August 2024)

**nfte | NEXUS**  
September 2024

### The Power of Partnership: GEAR UP Massachusetts and the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship

Recent studies show that education remains a key to financial success. In fact, Americans with a bachelor's degree earn, on average, more than \$1 million more over their lifetime than those with just a high school diploma. Programs like GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) play a vital role in helping students—especially those from underserved backgrounds—prepare for postsecondary success. GEAR UP currently supports about 200,000 students across nearly 8,000 schools, where over half of the students receive free or reduced-price lunch.

Established in 1998 as an amendment to the Higher Education Act of 1965, GEAR UP offers six- to seven-year state and partnership grants to help low-income students enroll and succeed in college. Designed to be both flexible and community-based, the program encourages grantees to adopt local approaches tailored to their own community needs, which involves engaging K-12, higher education, and various organizations to work on solutions together.

Since 2016, GEAR UP Massachusetts and the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) have partnered to bring entrepreneurship education to middle and high school students across the Commonwealth. This collaboration has supported hundreds of GEAR UP students, with some advancing to pitch their business ideas at NFTE's regional and national competitions. The partnership highlights the power of combining programs to better serve students: GEAR UP offers a strong support network to guide students through middle and high school and help them choose a postsecondary path, while NFTE enhances this by equipping students with critical life skills, promoting economic mobility, and expanding career opportunities.

This partnership demonstrates the value of integrating college access programs with entrepreneurship education. By combining GEAR UP's academic support with NFTE's practical skill building, students are better prepared for both college and the evolving workforce. Based on the success of this model, NFTE commends expanding such collaborations, as they can both open doors to education and ensure student education meets the real-world skills needed for long-term success.

**About NFTE**  
The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) is a global educational nonprofit that empowers partners to integrate entrepreneurial education across curricula and equips youth in under-resourced communities with the skills, connections, credentials, and real-world experiences needed to lead change and own their future. Since 1987, NFTE has reached more than a million learners worldwide.

**nfte | NEXUS**  
May 2025

### A Unified Voice for Youth Entrepreneurship: National Coalition Takes to Capitol Hill

Collective action turns ideas into impact. That spirit powered the April 2024 visit to Capitol Hill by a national coalition of youth entrepreneurship organizations. The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE), along with BUILD.org, NAF, the CAPS Network, Project Lead the Way, The Possible Zone, and Virtual Enterprises International, Inc., came together in Washington, D.C. to advocate for the inclusion of entrepreneurship education into federal education and workforce policy. Collectively, the coalition reaches over 2.8 million students nationwide, representing diverse geographies, lived experiences, and career aspirations. The coalition was joined by American Student Assistance (ASA), a national leader in youth career readiness and a key supporter of many coalition members, further amplifying the collective call for action.

Meeting with members of Congress and staff from both parties, the coalition made a compelling case for deeper investment in work-based and skills-based learning. That shared message, entrepreneurial education is a vital strategy for accelerating economic mobility and ensuring that all students have a fair shot at a bright future in the American education system.

Presented from left to right: Gus Helms (Chief Innovation Officer, The Possible Zone), Corina Miller (President & Executive Director, CAPS Network), Tina Kavanagh (President & Executive Director, CAPS Network), Lisa Smith (CEO, NAF), J.D. Lubick (President & CEO, NFTE), Li-Tsai Tsai (VP of Social Impact, American Student Assistance), and Tom Smith (President & CEO, Virtual Enterprises, Inc.).

**Coalition Members**  
CAPS NETWORK, BUILD, nfte, PLTW, VE, THE POSSIBLE ZONE

**About NFTE**  
The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) is a global educational nonprofit that empowers partners to integrate entrepreneurial education across curricula and equips youth in under-resourced communities with the skills, connections, credentials, and real-world experiences needed to lead change and own their future. Since 1987, NFTE has reached more than a million learners worldwide.

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August 2024

### Revolutionizing Education: The Promise of Microschools and Youth Entrepreneurship

The educational landscape is undergoing a significant transformation, with innovative models for K-12 education gaining momentum. The expanding school choice movement, which champions policies that empower parents to select the most fitting educational environments for their kids, is central to this shift. This movement, which saw a significant surge during the COVID-19 pandemic's educational upheaval, includes a diverse array of options—charter schools, vouchers, education savings accounts (ESAs), and more—designed to boost education outcomes through greater competition and innovation.

Among the many education models gaining traction, microschoools stand out as a particularly exciting and promising option. These intimate learning environments, typically serving between 10 to 15 students, and sometimes up to 150, are redefining what school can be. Microschools are designed to operate with greater flexibility and autonomy than traditional public schools, boasting small class sizes, personalized learning plans, and a deep commitment to student-centered education. This setup not only cultivates a close-knit and nurturing learning environment but also sparks innovative teaching practices tailored to the unique needs of each student. The growing popularity of microschoools is creating a vibrant landscape for education entrepreneurs, who are seizing the opportunity to establish schools nationwide, eager to deliver distinctive and impactful educational experiences.

Microschools offer a dual opportunity: they not only provide fertile ground for entrepreneurial leaders to launch innovative educational ventures, but also present a chance to nurture the next generation of entrepreneurs. At the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE), we see the integration of entrepreneurship into microschoools as a powerful way to create dynamic learning environments. Entrepreneurship education equips students with essential skills and a mindset for starting and managing their own businesses, emphasizing creativity, problem-solving, leadership, and financial literacy. The small, personalized nature of microschoools makes them an ideal setting for developing these entrepreneurial skills, offering students a unique opportunity to thrive as they prepare for future success.

### Microschools: A Response to Changing Educational Needs

While the U.S. has a rich history of small-scale educational settings, starting from one-room schoolhouses, there has been a notable surge in interest in microschoools since 2020. This rise can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted many parents to explore educational alternatives beyond traditional local schools.

**About NFTE**  
The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) is a global educational nonprofit that empowers partners to integrate entrepreneurial education across curricula and equips youth in under-resourced communities with the skills, connections, credentials, and real-world experiences needed to lead change and own their future. Since 1987, NFTE has reached more than a million learners worldwide.

**nfte | NEXUS**  
October 2024

### Reimagining Workforce Readiness: A Coalition's Vision for Youth Entrepreneurship

Recent reports reveal a concerning trend: 60% of employers have terminated recent college graduates, particularly Gen Z workers, this year. Employers cited a lack of motivation, organization, communication, and professionalism as key reasons, indicating that many young professionals are unprepared for the workforce. This has led to growing frustration among employers when it comes to hiring recent graduates, raising questions about how well we are preparing young people for their careers. The reality is that this issue isn't isolated. It points to a broader, systemic problem: our current approaches to education and workforce development are not adequately equipping the next generation for success. To create meaningful change, we need a dramatic shift in how we prepare youth for the future of work.

Recognizing this urgent need, a coalition of forward-thinking education organizations—including the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE), BUILD.org, NAF, Virtual Enterprises International, and CAPS Network—joined forces in their advocacy efforts over the past year. United by a shared mission, they aim to enhance the conversation around workforce readiness by championing entrepreneurship education as a powerful solution. These organizations believe in the strength of coalition-building to reimagine entrepreneurial education, as more than 100 education leaders from across the country have built social capital, encouraged career exploration, and provided hands-on, real-world experiences. In partnership with concepts like GEAR UP, ASU's GSV Summit, and Virtual Enterprises International, students now have a hand in their own career paths.

As a coalition, this coalition focuses on expanding student access to entrepreneurship opportunities, sharing impactful success stories, and offering policy recommendations to scale these programs nationwide. Its goal is to reimagine education so that every young person gains the skills, confidence, and mindset needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving workforce. Achieving this vision requires collaboration from educators, policymakers, and business leaders to ensure that these opportunities reach all students.

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June 2025

### Insights from NFTE's World Series of Innovation: Challenge-Based Learning in Action

In an age of rapid technological change and global disruption, even our youngest learners are growing capable of bold, entrepreneurial thinking. NFTE's World Series of Innovation (WSI) offers compelling evidence: when children and teens are invited to solve real-world problems through challenge-based learning, they don't just rise to the occasion—they generate insights that challenge assumptions about what young people are capable of. Through WSI, NFTE has uncovered important lessons about the capacity of young learners, particularly those in primary grades, to engage in complex problem-solving, demonstrate empathy, and propose meaningful solutions to global challenges. These insights suggest that entrepreneurship education, when introduced early and grounded in purpose, can unlock creativity, cognitive growth, and a lifelong sense of agency.

WSI is NFTE's global competition, which aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and invites young people to tackle real-world problems through creative, challenge-based learning. Since 2009, nearly 50,000 participants ages 10-24 from 88 countries have participated in WSI, with challenges sponsored by leading organizations such as Arancio, Intel, and the CHI Foundation. Each challenge invites students to reimagine their world by developing bold, innovative solutions to issues ranging from clean water access to responsible consumer practices.

WSI is intentionally designed for flexible participation, making it easy for participants to engage through schools, nonprofits, or independently with support from family members. In 2024, NFTE expanded WSI's reach by launching the Innovation League, a new track for children ages 8-10, and invited students to join the Innovation League for teens and young adults. Altogether, the competition now reaches approximately 5,000 young innovators annually, including nearly 1,200 primary students in its inaugural year of the Innovation League.

From kindergarten to young people entering the workforce, this year's WSI participants demonstrated that when young people are given the right tools, time, and encouragement, they can generate fresh ideas, apply them to real-world challenges, and make a difference in their communities.

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September 2024

### The Power of Partnership: GEAR UP Massachusetts and NFTE

Recent studies show that education remains a key to financial success. In fact, Americans with a bachelor's degree earn, on average, more than \$1 million more over their lifetime than those with just a high school diploma. Programs like GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) play a vital role in helping students—especially those from underserved backgrounds—prepare for postsecondary success. GEAR UP currently supports about 200,000 students across nearly 8,000 schools, where over half of the students receive free or reduced-price lunch.

Established in 1998 as an amendment to the Higher Education Act of 1965, GEAR UP offers six- to seven-year state and partnership grants to help low-income students enroll and succeed in college. Designed to be both flexible and community-based, the program encourages grantees to adopt local approaches tailored to their own community needs, which involves engaging K-12, higher education, and various organizations to work on solutions together.

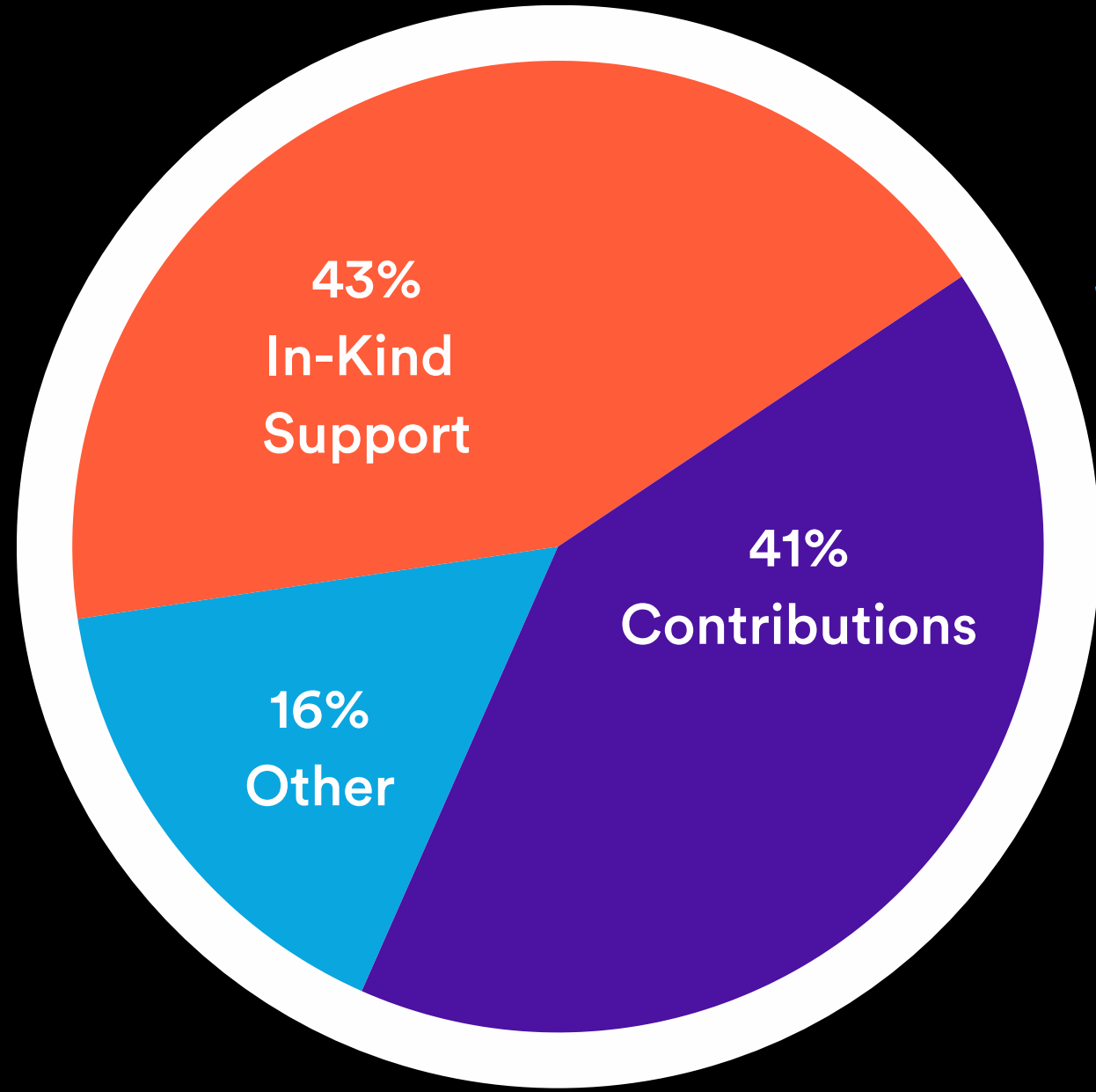
Since 2016, GEAR UP Massachusetts and the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) have partnered to bring entrepreneurship education to middle and high school students across the Commonwealth. This collaboration has supported hundreds of GEAR UP students, with some advancing to pitch their business ideas at NFTE's regional and national competitions. The partnership highlights the power of combining programs to better serve students: GEAR UP offers a strong support network to guide students through middle and high school and help them choose a postsecondary path, while NFTE enhances this by equipping students with critical life skills, promoting economic mobility, and expanding career opportunities.

This partnership demonstrates the value of integrating college access programs with entrepreneurship education. By combining GEAR UP's academic support with NFTE's practical skill building, students are better prepared for both college and the evolving workforce. Based on the success of this model, NFTE commends expanding such collaborations, as they can both open doors to education and ensure student education meets the real-world skills needed for long-term success.

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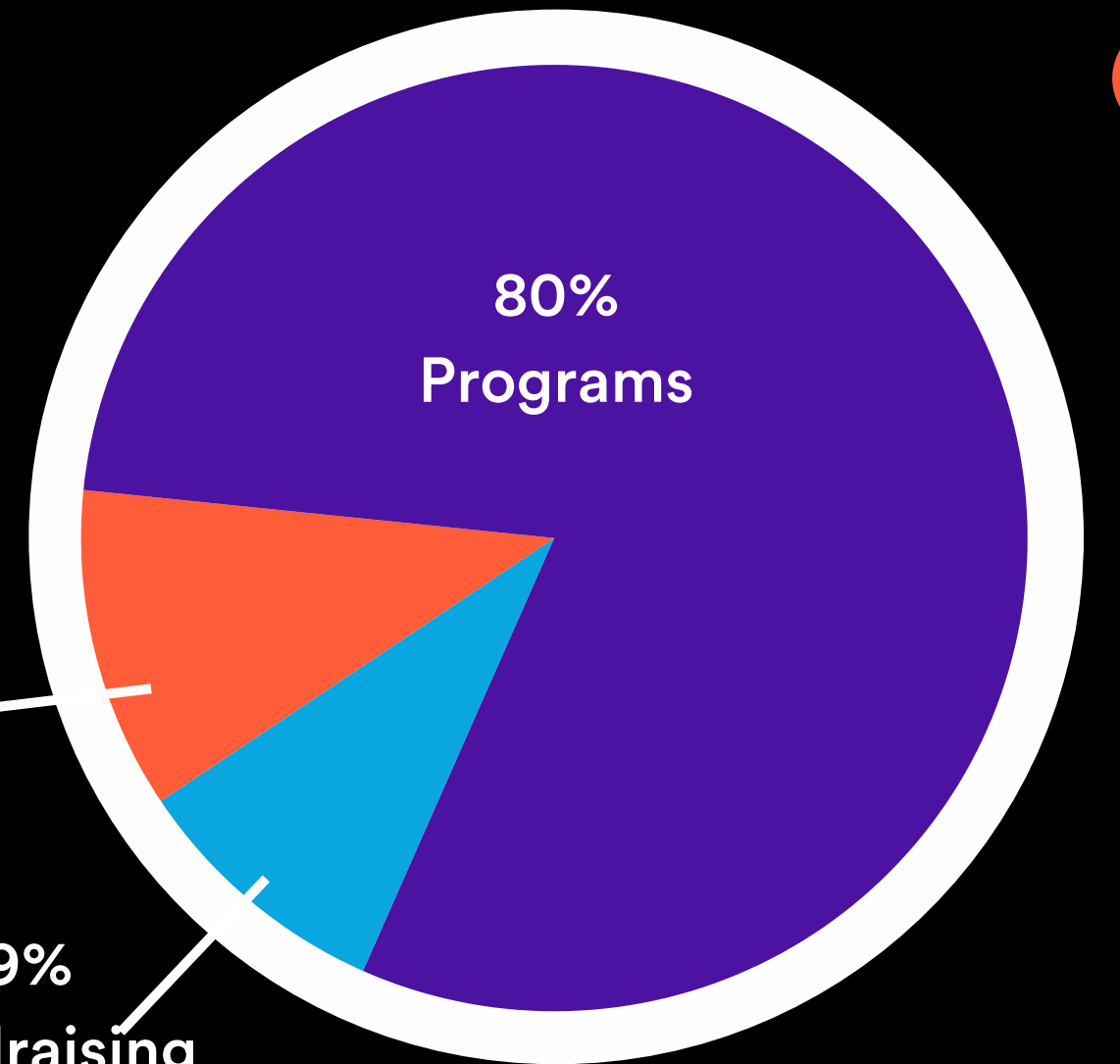


# FY2025 FINANCIALS



**\$15,674,902**  
Support & Revenue

**\$20,049,851**  
Expenses





**NFTE IS POSSIBLE  
BECAUSE OF YOU!**



**86%**

Students from USA



**14%**

Global Students



**76%**

of NFTE's students  
qualify for free and  
reduced-price  
school meals

**Entrepreneurial Leaders | \$1M+**



# THANK YOU

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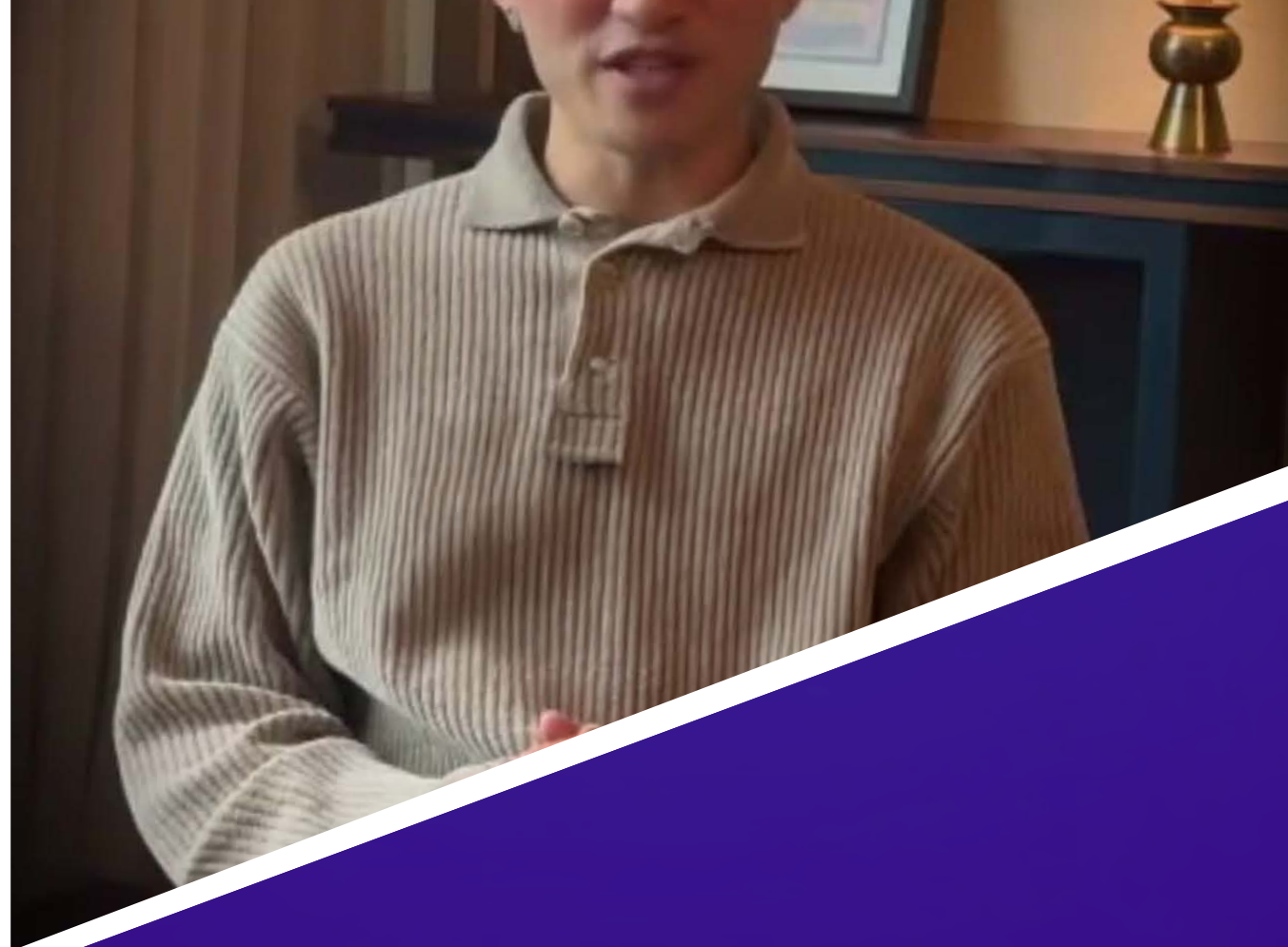
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212 232 3333



GetStarted@nfte.com



nfte.com/give



120 Wall Street, 18th Floor  
New York, NY 10005